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THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON TUBERCULOSIS IN WASHINGTON

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Secretary of Nurses' Session

BEFORE trying to describe the wonderful success of the Congress, especially as to our interest, the special session for nurses, it is proper to emphasize once more that the credit for this unique recognition of nurses as important factors in the warfare against tuberculosis is due to Miss Adelaide Nutting, formerly of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, now, as everyone knows, at Columbia University in the Chair of Institutional Management. Although a few individual nurses would have been placed on the general program through the action of Mr. Devine, no special recognition of them as a body had been planned or even thought of by the men who were organizing the congress. Miss Nutting, realizing their actual importance in tuberculosis work and foreseeing its great extension, was determined that conspicuous recognition should be given to them in this congress, and the result of her far-sight and energy was the special session held on Thursday, October first, which must be marked with a white stone in our history. The session was one of the regular program of Section V under Mr. Devine's presidency, "The Economic and Social Aspects of Tuberculosis." The Chair, however, for the morning, was yielded by Mr. Devine to Miss Lillian D. Wald, who inspired the gathering with a special feeling of interest.

That the meeting went with a swing may be judged by the fact that some fifteen or sixteen papers were read, and a little time was even available for discussion. The papers were short and practical and intensely interesting. They dealt with every phase of nursing work as regards tuberculosis and excited general attention. Indeed we heard some remarks to the effect that the nursing session was the most interesting of all the meetings. A goodly number of nurses was present and the room was filled to its utmost capacity with a general audience. At the end, Mr. Devine himself, Dr. Fulton, the secretary-general, and a number of other physicians shared in the discussion.

From the standpoint of the advance of the nursing profession it was most inspiring and gratifying to see the splendid array of young and enthusiastic women who presented their papers, and to realize how extremely intelligent and thoughtful they were on all the social and economic questions underlying the strictly medical and nursing aspects

of the great white plague. Their papers were by no means simply nursing papers, nor limited to the mere work of a nurse with a patient. They were also valuable contributions to the deeper social questions which were throughout made prominent in Section V. To an observer who can look back twenty-five odd years and compare the general knowledge of nurses of social conditions at that time, as related to problems of sickness and health, with the all-round, well-balanced intelligence of the young nurses who presented papers at this congress, the contrast is most encouraging, for one realizes that, after all, in spite of obstacles and discouragements an immense advance has been made in the broader education of nurses.

The first paper was read by Mrs. VonWagner, of Yonkers, who gave with her accustomed energy an account of the opportunities of a sanitary inspector to assist in the tuberculosis propaganda. It had been hoped to have some discussion upon the policy of the New York Tenement House Department which forbids its inspectors to do any personal teaching of tenants, but this was not forthcoming. Miss Elsie T. Patterson, of the Vanderbilt Clinic, described the methods of disinfection in tenement houses of New York City. Miss Marie Phelan, of Rochester, in a very frank and outspoken paper, detailed what is *not* done in the disinfection of houses in cities. Miss Bertha L. Stark, in an exceedingly well-prepared paper, described the very interesting work that has been recently developed in the public schools of Pittsburgh in teaching the children preventive hygiene as to tuberculosis.

That we may in the future expect large and systematic extension of nurses' work in the tuberculosis campaign was to have been emphasized by accounts of the staff of nurses employed by a large city (New York) and that under a state department (Pennsylvania), where there are now county dispensaries for tuberculosis in every county of the state, and where nurses, at present connected with about half of these dispensaries, are to be finally placed in each one. These two papers, however, were only read by title as was also a paper presented by Dr. Jay Perkins on the District Nurses' Association in Providence. From Denver came a paper on the attitude of the modern district nurse to tuberculosis, sent by Miss Florence Smithwick, superintendent of the Visiting Nurses' Association. An excellent and suggestive paper on "Sanatorium Atmosphere" was read by Mrs. F. R. Burgess, who has developed the Gaylord Farm Sanatorium to great perfection. Miss M. A. Gallagher, of Boston, discussed the discharged sanatorium patient, a paper with important side-lights upon social conditions. Mrs. M. E. Hoffman, of White Haven, Pa., herself a cured patient, now a nurse,

wrote on the personal hygiene of the patient. Miss S. F. Robbins had a paper full of practical and useful information on day-camps. In the absence of Miss Frances Hostetter, her paper on the tuberculosis class in the Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia was read by title. Miss Edna L. Foley, of Boston, wrote on home teaching. Miss Ida Cannon, head-worker of the Social Service Department in the Massachusetts General Hospital gave a comprehensive paper on tuberculosis classes and social service work. The importance of nursing and supervision of advanced cases of tuberculosis was one of the clarion calls of the morning, read by Miss Fulmer, superintendent of the Chicago Visiting Nurses' Association. Miss Anne K. Sutton, superintendent of the Phipps' Institute Training School for Nurses, then gave an account of the training in tuberculosis nursing which is given to cured or improved patients who are adapted for this branch of work. The Institute gives these young women a certificate of competence to nurse just this one class of cases, and they never undertake general nursing. As employment in sanatoria opens to these young women means of self-support as well as providing the patients with sympathetic and specially trained attendants, general sympathy was felt for this branch of Mr Phipps' philanthropic work, though it is doubtful whether in justice to themselves they should be placed on private duty or indoor hospital work.

Mrs. Lupinsky, of Michigan, who had hoped to prepare a paper on the need of special training for tuberculosis nursing—a subject which she feels is highly important—was prevented by press of work from sending her paper. However, the fact that the technical side of nursing in tuberculosis has been developed to a highly specialized degree and that nurses with a general training only are therefore often quite at sea when first taken into sanitarium work or private duty, was made evident by some of the papers and discussions. On this point Mrs. Gretter of Detroit, in a written discussion, urged more thorough training in sociological knowledge. The subject of home occupations and its dangers was strikingly presented by Miss Mabel Jacques, of the Visiting Nurses' Association of Philadelphia, and the tuberculosis nurse as a social worker was described by Miss E. P. Upjohn, of Boston. "The True Function of the Tuberculosis Nurse," read by Miss Lent, superintendent of the Visiting Nurses' Association of Baltimore, closed the session, and excited general discussion. Other papers of great interest which came in too late to be read were one on "Tuberculosis in Rural North Carolina," by Miss Holman; "Tuberculosis among the Indians," by Miss Carter; "Tuberculosis in Japan," by Miss San, and one on the advanced case by Miss Cabaniss. There was an interesting account of the first

sanitarium in Italy, sent by Miss Amy Turton, of Florence, and a paper on "Instructions to Consumptives," by Sister Hertha Leibjschel, of Berlin.

Aside from the nurses' special session, several papers were read by nurses in other sessions of Section V. Miss Wald, of the Nurses' Settlement in New York, gave "The Social Significance and Educational Value of the Nurse in Tuberculosis Work." Mrs. Robb discussed "Woman's Responsibility for the Prevention of Tuberculosis," and Miss La Motte, of the Baltimore Visiting Nurses' Association, read a paper on the "Un-teachable Consumptive," which attracted a great deal of attention.

The exhibits of the congress were of wonderful interest. It is considered that on the whole the exhibit was the most comprehensive and most instructive that has ever been brought together, even although, by the bad management of our Customs Houses, the exhibits from several foreign countries were not even unpacked.

Of strictly nursing exhibits there were some very interesting examples of which the Baltimore and Philadelphia Visiting Nurse Associations were in the first rank. The Baltimore nurses concentrated their efforts on demonstrating the social problem of the unteachable and careless consumptive which was also so ably and frankly treated in their papers. A striking set of charts showed the extremely small number of those who were classed as adequately careful and therefore not a source of danger to their families, the slightly larger number of those who were fairly careful, the very large number of those who were careless and the number, still alarmingly large of those who were grossly careless and thus undoubtedly a great source of danger to their communities. The argument made by the Baltimore nurses for compulsory segregation was thus strongly supported. Very impressive also was their showing, out of three thousand patients that exactly one-half were on, and the other half below, the poverty line. Their charts also showed that a large proportion of the cases are found by the nurses themselves, namely 20 per cent., while 50 per cent. came from dispensaries and 9 per cent. from physicians.

The Philadelphia Visiting Nurses' Association showed an admirably arranged life-size exhibit of a room as found with a tuberculosis patient in the last stages in bed in the kitchen where his mother, a colored woman, was doing fine laundry work. The contrasting room showed what they succeeded in doing in this case. Their whole exhibit was most instructive as to the social problem. Miss Jacques was in charge of the exhibit, and her paper on "Home Occupations" was a valuable contribution.

The exhibit from Providence also showed a horribly life-like model of a dark, unwholesome bedroom with the same re-arranged. The Brooklyn Bureau of Charities had some interesting photographs of their nursing work showing many ingenious adaptations of porches, roofs and windows for the open-air treatment. The Boston nurses demonstrated their dispensary work.

The attempt to describe the exhibit as a whole would go far over our space, but I may note the photographs of the out-door workshops at Saranac where the patients work out of doors in midwinter at tables which are heated by hot water pipes. The model window tents and various contrivances for living out of doors were numerous and all had some points of interest, especially those from Colorado and the western states.

It must be regarded as a special feather in the nurse's cap that of the five women among the seventy men of the General Committee on Awards, one was a nurse, Miss La Motte. She was placed on a sub-committee for judging the laws of municipalities, states and nations in regard to the control and prevention of tuberculosis. Another interesting instance of the growth of popular interest in this subject was that Miss Mary Riddle, superintendent of the Newton Hospital, was sent to the congress by the town council of Newton Lower Falls, in order to study the subject and bring home information. Some eighty odd nurses registered at the special session and many of them were present throughout the whole week.

The district nurses of Washington gave a delightful reception, at their home, and the District of Columbia Association entertained all the visitors at an evening reception at Garfield Hospital. There we had the pleasure of meeting Miss Hasson, the newly appointed chief of nurses for the navy. Miss Hibbard was present at the earlier sessions of the congress, before her departure for Cuba. It was a disappointment that Mlle. Chaptal, who had been expected, was unable to leave Paris. Dr. Rist, one of the French physicians who came to our meetings in Paris, looked in at our special session for a moment.

The week was closed by a reception at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Even without going to the medical sessions we had the opportunity of hearing the great Dr. Koch. He came twice to Dr. Devine's section, speaking on popular education and on the institute now being founded in Berlin and named in his honor.